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Hill Told Intervention Would Bind Angola to Cuba, Soviet

By Don Oberdorfer
Washington Post Staff Writer

Renewed U.S. aid to antigovernment guerrillas in Angola would have disastrous political, economic and social impact there and make the ruling regime more dependent than ever on Cuban and Soviet aid, two experts on the area told the African subcommittee of the House International Relations Committee yesterday.

With a chair kept empty at the witness table for Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Richard M. Moose Jr., who failed to appear because of the heightened "sensitivities" of the issue, members of Congress as well as witnesses expressed fears that the Carter administration is moving toward a renewal of intervention, covertly or openly, in the Angolan civil war.

John Stockwell, the former chief of the Central Intelligence Agency's Angola Task Force who has written a book criticizing U.S. operations there, charged that the CIA "very much wants to go back into Angola" and said it is "quite plausible" that CIA Director Stansfield Turner had approached senators on the matter without the knowledge of President Carter.

Both Stockwell and Assistant Prof. Gerald J. Bender of the University of California, who has made three long visits to Angola in the past 10 years, urged lawmakers not to ease the legal prohibitions, enacted in early 1976, which halted the covert U.S. aid to factions in the Angolan civil war.

"If the Carter administration does not have the wisdom to compete peacefully against the Russians, then the Congress should at least prevent the president and his national security adviser from opting for further senseless, counterproductive bloodshed," said Bender.

As the two witnesses told the story — in the first congressional hearing on the potential consequences of a new American intervention in Angola — previous U.S. paramilitary aid and operations were a major factor in generating the Cuban and Soviet presence there and would cause a redoubling of communist support if the opposition were renewed.

that U.S. aid to UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) and FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola) guerrillas could bring down the government of President Agostinho Neto. Stockwell said that "the thinking now is to create a Vietnam for Cuba there" by tying up Cuban troops in a war against the rebels. The resulting conflict would "tie us up as well" and lead to useless and heavy spilling of blood by Angolans on all sides, he said.

The witnesses disputed at length the public perceptions of the conflicts in Angola and neighboring Shaba Province in Zaire fostered by national security organs of the U.S. government and reported in many press accounts. Specifically, Bender reported:

- While it may be true that the Katangans who recently raided Shaba province were trained and armed by Cubans, this does not define their movement. The Katangan force, over the past 15 years, has been armed and trained at one time or another by white mercenaries, Belgians, French and Portuguese, and fought on the side of the Portuguese for almost 10 years against the governmental leaders whom the Cubans now support, he said.

- Cuba had begun to reduce its military force in Angola after the Carter administration came to office early last year, with weekly withdrawals beginning about February. However, this was reversed and additional Cuban troops dispatched after major attacks against Angola were mounted from South Africa and Zaire and after the Neto regime was challenged internally by a racist and radical dissident faction which had Moscow's backing, Bender said.

- UNITA and FNLA, which had U.S. support in the past, are more anti-white than the Neto government, which has a multiracial policy. Any program to destabilize the Neto regime would be likely to result in the destabilization of multiracialism in Angola, he said.

supported by France, Zaire and Gabon, and considers the Gulf Oil Co., which continues to operate the Angolan oil fields in Cabinda Province, as a major enemy. A FLEC victory could mean the end of American access to the Angolan oil fields, to the advantage of competing French companies, he said.

"I'm seeing the emergence now of a French-American struggle over the corporate side of Angola," said Bender. He charged that the French are seeking to manipulate the United States in their own interest.

Bender said it is "obvious" that the Cubans are a stabilizing force in Angola, as previously stated by U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young. He said 900 Cuban doctors and nurses perform necessary medical tasks, nearly 2,000 Cubans are working on housing projects and more than 700 additional Cuban school teachers for the countryside recently arrived.

The Angolans "need some kind of help, and they chose Cubans," Bender said. He said it is "extremely misleading" to dismiss or minimize Cuba's civil importance.

The professor, who has written extensively on Angola, said that country's economy had notably improved between January 1977 and January 1978, based on his eyewitness experience there.

He ridiculed reports that the capital of Luanda is "a ghost town," and told the committee that Brazilian-made Volkswagens and Soviet-made Fiats compete for favor in a country which is quite different from the impression which abounds outside.